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EO 13526
3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 13526
3.5(c)

3.5(b) [redacted]

Jorge Rafael VIDELA
(Phonetic: veeDEHla)

ARGENTINA

President (since March 1976)

Addressed as:
Mr. President

MICROFILMED
OFFICE OF
CENTRAL REFERENCE

On 24 March 1976 then Army Commander Lt. Gen. Jorge Videla led a bloodless coup against the government of President María de Perón. Five days later he was installed as Argentina's 39th president. Videla, who retired from the Army in July 1978, shares supreme governing authority with the members of a three-man military junta, which represents the three services. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Before the coup, while many officers lobbied vociferously to end the inept Peronist government, Videla was the voice of patience. Ironically, he sincerely tried to keep the Army out of politics. Eventually, however, a nonfunctioning government, rampant terrorism, a 300 percent yearly inflation rate, and an economy near collapse compelled him to act. The coup was well managed and methodical, showing careful attention to detail and a well-disciplined command structure. Since then, under Videla's guidance, inflation has been significantly reduced and terrorism nearly eliminated from Argentine life. Today, because Argentina is an important world food producer and exporter and is nearly self-sufficient in energy, it is able to negotiate with other nations from a position of strength. Despite Videla's successes, however, hardline members of the armed forces are unhappy with his moderate, cautious approach to government, his backing for the austerity policies of Economy Minister José Martínez de Hoz, and what they view as an overly moderate stance on the Beagle Channel sovereignty dispute with Chile. To date the malcontents pose no threat to Videla's government. [redacted] 3.5(c)

Argentine Nationalist

Videla has a strong sense of nationalism and pride in Argentina's independence and potential.

3.5(b) [redacted]

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Although pro-United States, he is ready to assert Argentina's independence and to enhance its prestige and influence in the world, even if this means transcending traditional alliances. He is also intent on reestablishing the democratic process in Argentine politics, though not before he is convinced it can be done without economic disruption. 3.5(c)

The President travels extensively in Argentina, and he has met privately with representatives of the religious, scientific, business and rural communities, as well as with members of the press. He has also made several trips to other South American countries to strengthen relations. Videla came to the United States several times before becoming President. In 1977 he visited this country for the signing of the Panama Canal treaties. In 1979 he visited Japan in a bid to strengthen economic and commercial ties. 3.5(c)

Career

Videla was born into an Army family in Mercedes, Buenos Aires Province. He entered the Argentine Military Academy in 1942 and began his career as an infantry officer in 1944. Significant military assignments he has held include those of director, Military Academy (1971-72); chief, Army General Staff (1973-75); chief, Armed Forces Joint Staff (1975); and Commander in Chief, Army (1975-78). 3.5(c)

Personal Data

Videla, 54, is a professional soldier of unquestioned integrity, a strict moralist of the old school, and a devout Roman Catholic. His hatred of corruption and his religious devotion are legendary in Argentina.

3.3(b)(1)

Married to the former Alicia Raquel Hartridge, Videla has seven children. He speaks some English. 3.5(c)

19 May 1980

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